

Remarks on the Nomination of Representative John M. McHugh To Be Secretary of the Army

June 2, 2009

Good afternoon, everybody. As President and Commander in Chief, I have no greater responsibility than the security of the American people. And keeping the American people safe demands keeping our Armed Forces strong: the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coast guardsmen who bear the burden of America's defense.

Few have borne a heavier burden in recent years than America's Army: the soldiers, active, guard, and reserve, who have deployed multiple times to Afghanistan and Iraq; the thousands who have given life or limb, or our wounded warriors, like those I'll be visiting this week in Germany, and the spouses and children, the heroes back home, like those my wife Michelle has visited at Fort Bragg and around the country; and the veterans we honor still, like the heroes of D-Day who we'll remember this week in Normandy.

As a nation, we have a sacred trust with all those who wear the uniform to always take care of them as they take care of us. And that's why my administration is increasing funding for our military, including the Army, and increasing the size of the Army 2 years ahead of schedule. That's why we're investing in the equipment our forces need today, including the additional Army helicopters and crews urgently needed in Afghanistan. That's why we're investing in the new capabilities demanded by 21st century missions. And that's why we're increasing support to soldiers and families, increasing pay, investing \$1.7 billion in Army family programs, and making historic investments to improve care for our wounded warriors and veterans.

And today I'm proud to announce the distinguished public servant who will help keep us safe and keep our sacred trust with our soldiers and their families, the next Secretary of the Army, the ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, John McHugh.

Through more than 30 years of public service at the local, State, and national level, John has proven himself a dedicated representative of the people of northern New York. But it is his service over the past 16 years in Congress as a champion of our men and women in uniform that uniquely qualifies him to help lead America's Army.

John understands personally and deeply the sacrifices that our soldiers and their families make every day. Just ask the soldiers he's always fought for in his district at Fort Drum, home to the legendary 10th Mountain Division, the most deployed division in the U.S. Army, or ask the soldiers he's visited on his many trips to Iraq and Afghanistan.

John is committed to keeping America's Army the best-trained, the best-equipped, the best-led land force the world has ever seen. He has been a member of the Armed Services Committee for 16 years. He has been a cochair of the House Army Caucus for 14 years. He served as ranking member of the Military Personnel Subcommittee. As Secretary of the Army, he will ensure that our soldiers are trained and equipped to meet the full spectrum of challenges and threats of our time, the conventional and the unconventional, the nation-state and the terrorist network.

John understands that confronting these challenges also requires something else. He served on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and three of its key

subcommittees. He knows that we—when we send our forces into harm's way, they need the best, most accurate intelligence to protect our soldiers and advance our interests.

At the same time, John knows that we must reform the way the Pentagon and the Army does business. Along with Senators Carl Levin and John McCain and Representative Ike Skelton, he played a leading role in passing the landmark Weapons System Acquisition Reform Act, which I signed into law 2 weeks ago. As Secretary, he will help lead our efforts to save taxpayers billions of dollars and equip our soldiers with the weapons they need on time and on budget.

Most importantly, John understands that the Army's greatest strength is its people. He served for many years on the board of visitors of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He's been honored by our soldiers and their families for his efforts to increase their readiness, health care, and quality of life. As Secretary, he will ensure that America keeps faith with our soldiers, increasing their pay, increasing child care, and helping families deal with the stress and strain of war.

Finally, John shares my belief that a sustainable national security strategy must include a bipartisan consensus at home. He hasn't agreed with every decision my administration has made, but he brings patriotism and a pragmatism that has won him respect on both sides of the aisle.

I should note that this patriotism runs in the McHugh family. During World War II, John's father served with distinction on a B-17 bomber, his mother cared for wounded GIs through the Nurses Corps.

I know giving up his seat in Congress after nine terms will require a sacrifice both for John and his constituents, but I also know that he is more than ready to carry on his family's tradition of service and to write the next great chapter of his own service to his country. And I know that the Army and America will be stronger for it.

With that, I'd like to invite John to say a few words.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:56 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Rep. McHugh.

Categories: Appointments and Nominations : Army Department, Secretary, remarks.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Levin, Carl; McCain, John; McHugh, John M.; Obama, Michelle; Skelton, Isaac Newton "Ike," IV.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Armed Forces, U.S. : Expansion; Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; Armed Forces, U.S. : Military families; Armed Forces, U.S. : Service members :: Casualties; Armed Forces, U.S. : Service members :: Service and dedication; Army, Department of the : Military Academy, U.S.; Army, Department of the : Secretary-designate; Budget, Federal : Government programs, spending reductions; Defense and national security : Intelligence; Defense, Department of : Weapons System Acquisition Reforms Act of 2009; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Terrorism : Global threat; Veterans : Health care; Veterans Affairs, Department of : Medical care system, funding.

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